

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

Education for Life

Programs making a difference for people everywhere.

The original role of land-grant universities included practical education that affected the daily lives of Americans. Now, more than 140 years later, the USDA and land-grant partnership still provides people across the country reliable, research-based information that makes a difference. In areas ranging from production agriculture to quality child care, citizens can count on land-grant universities for practical research and educational programs that improve the quality of their lives.

Payoff

- **Mastering skills.** Land-grant universities offer programs that help people master skills. As a result, those people are learning more, sharing their knowledge and maximizing the results of their careers and hobbies. **Kentucky** Extension's award-winning Master Logger program has trained more than 1,300 people to make logging operations safer and more environmentally friendly. **Alabama** Extension used distance education to teach similar skills to 145 people last year. **Louisiana** Extension's successful Master Farmer program has taught more than 1,500 farmers how to maximize profits and minimize environmental impacts. Now, **Mississippi State**, **Arkansas** and **Texas A&M** have joined in implementing it, and a template is being prepared to help other Southern states adopt the program. A **Georgia** distance-education program has taught more than 3,400 "green industry" professionals from all 50 states and 30 countries. It allows them to continue their education and achieve certification while remaining in their current jobs. **Penn State** also has had more than 1,400 enroll in its online turfgrass management degree program.
- **Learning about quality child care.** High-quality child care is a positive force in child development, so land-grant universities nationwide have implemented research and education efforts to help parents recognize quality child care and to help providers deliver it. The **Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute** is helping Head Start workers in Arizona achieve child development certification. **Michigan State's** Better Kid Care program last year led to a 250 percent increase in the number of licensed child care providers among its participants. In a **Virginia State** training program, 89 percent of participating child care workers said they would improve some practices as a result of what they learned. **Cornell** pilot-tested a

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guide that evaluated the quality of certain New York child care facilities and found three-quarters of the parents surveyed were interested in such a guide to help them select a care provider.

- **Being better parents.** Child care is just one of the unending challenges facing today's parents. Research and Extension programs across the country are helping them to meet those challenges. Studies show **New Mexico State's** Strengthening Families Initiative has decreased teen pregnancy, school dropouts and juvenile delinquency by strengthening parent-child relationships, building self-sufficiency and encouraging healthy behaviors. The nationally acclaimed statewide program reached about 1,300 parents and 1,400 children. **Kansas State's** Fireworks Web site has helped more than 5,000 visitors learn about anger management. **Idaho** implemented distance education techniques for parenting classes in some remote counties and found 41 percent of participating parents were better able to respond to their children. In **Tennessee's** Parenting Apart workshops, more than 90 percent of divorced parents say they learned effective ways to work together for their children's best interests. **Arizona** also has developed resources for grandparents raising grandchildren. Thanks to those efforts, the number of support groups for such families increased from one in 2000 to 28 in 2004.
- **Managing money and buying homes.** As a result of extension money management education that reached nearly 675,000 people in **New Hampshire**, 54 percent of participants said they decreased debt, 51 percent are saving, 67 percent now follow a spending plan and 99 percent reported they felt more confident making money decisions. Such improvements also make people more likely to be able to buy homes. In a **Purdue** Extension Basic Money Management series, 17 of 20 participants got approved for home ownership. Likewise, 35 percent of participants in one of **Minnesota's** 2004 home purchasing education programs already have purchased homes.

- **Handling food safely.** Avoiding foodborne disease requires appropriate food handling. An effort partnering **Louisiana State, Southern University, Arkansas and Mississippi State** trained about 500 food handlers for food recovery agencies serving the hungry and found that 98 percent of them increased their knowledge of safe food-handling procedures as a result. Likewise, **Colorado State's** implementation of programs based on the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation's ServSafe curriculum reached nearly 1,200 restaurant personnel and food handlers from nursing homes, grocery stores, jails and so forth. More than 84 percent of participants said they planned to adopt one or more of the recommended safe food handling practices. In similar **Iowa State** efforts based on ServSafe, 91 percent of the 700 participants received a passing score on the certification examination, and most said they would implement new food safety practices in their operations.
- **Much more.** The list of ways land-grant universities are improving lives goes on and on. Like many others, **Wyoming** is helping future community leaders develop critical skills and has initiated five locally based institutes. Programs like those at **Cankdeska Cikana Community College** are helping people on the Spirit Lake Reservation develop job skills and move into the workforce – demonstrating an employment rate of 90 percent among participants.



**Cooperative State Research, Education,
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